

No. 3.

THE FREETHINKER'S  
TEXT-BOOK.

PART I.

RELIGION: WHAT AND WHY?  
OR, GOD = X.

BY C. BRADLAUGH.



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# RELIGION : WHAT & WHY ?

OR, GOD = X.

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IT has been broadly contended that man is a religious animal, and it is no unfrequent thing to hear it asserted that all men, however barbarous, have some religion. The Rev. Mr. Pearson, in his prize essay on "Infidelity," p. 7, says : "Faith in God is so inherent in the heart of humanity, and so essential to our reason, that many wise and good men have doubted if ever there lived an intelligent mortal so absolutely destitute of religious belief as is implied in Atheism." Sir John Lubbock ("Origin of Civilisation," p. 121) says : "The opinion that religion is general and universal has been entertained by many high authorities. Yet it is opposed to the evidence of numerous trustworthy observers. Sailors, traders, and philosophers, Roman Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries, in ancient and modern times, in every part of the globe, have concurred in stating that there are races of men who are devoid of religion. The case is stronger, because in several instances the fact has greatly surprised him who records it, and has been entirely in opposition to all his pre-conceived views. On the other hand, it must be confessed that in some cases travellers denied the existence of a religion merely because the tenets were unlike ours. The question as to the general existence of religion among men is, indeed, to a great extent, a matter of definition. If the mere sensation of fear, and the recognition that there are other beings more powerful than man, are sufficient alone to constitute a religion, then we must, I think, admit that religion is general to the human race. But when a child dreads the darkness, and shrinks from a lightless room, we never regard that as an evidence of religion. Moreover, if this definition be adopted, we can no longer regard religion as peculiar to man. We must admit that the feeling of a dog or a horse towards its master is of the same character, and the baying of a dog to the moon is



as much an act of worship as some ceremonies which have been so much described by travellers."

The inhabitants of the world are roughly calculated at about 1,300,000,000, whose religions are, in the "Statesman's Year-Book," given as follows :—

Buddhists...	...	...	...	...	...	405,600,000
Christians...	...	...	...	...	...	399,200,000
Mahomedans	...	...	...	...	...	204,200,000
Brahminists	...	...	...	...	...	174,200,000
Nondescript Heathens	...	...	...	...	...	111,000,000
Jews ...	...	...	...	...	...	5,000,000

This calculation is loose and inaccurate, as it makes no allowance for Sceptics in Europe or America ; and, notwithstanding that every man, woman, and child, is put down as either Protestant, or Catholic, or Jew, there are certainly a very large number of men and women on both Continents who ought not to be classified as Christians. For example, in Great Britain and Ireland, where Earl Russell said, in a speech, that there were " millions of Atheists," we have the whole population, except the Jews, recorded as if they were, every one, either Catholic or Protestant. We think that Earl Russell erred considerably in his enumeration of English Atheists, but it is, nevertheless, certain that there are, in Great Britain, very large numbers of Freethinkers. We find the Bishop of Ripon, in his triennial charge, prominently mentioning the growth of Scepticism ; the Home Secretary, Mr. Cross, in the House of Commons, recently testified to the increase in numbers and influence of English Freethinkers ; and the Rev. Gervase Smith, the President of the Wesleyans, gave similar testimony. In France, where 98½ per cent. of the population are returned as Catholics, and the other 1½ per cent. as Protestants, we find a large number of Bishops, headed by l'Evêque d'Orleans, declaring that nearly all the members of the medical profession in that country are Materialists, and that the professional schoolmasters are anti-Christian (*Les Alarmes de l'Episcopat justifiées par les Faits*). It is, too, a noticeable fact that, in the large centres of industry, funerals without any religious ceremonies are extremely frequent, and are attended by very large gatherings of persons, who openly favour the abstaining from religious rites.

In Germany, and in the various States united as the German

Empire, although here, too, every one is put down as either Protestant or Roman Catholic, the Freethinking element is very large indeed. Besides those who are really Freethinkers, there is, in France and Germany, a very large proportion of the male population who are utterly indifferent to Christianity. "Germany," says the Rev. Thos. Pearson, "of all the countries of modern Europe, is the most prolific soil of Pantheism" (p. 28). "And Pantheism reaches the point to which it is ever tending—the very verge of Atheism. Such has been, and is, in a great measure, still the faith of immense multitudes of people on the Continent in the middle of the nineteenth century" (p. 33).

In the United States the number of sects of Christians is very large, and many Unitarians are classified as Christians, although they are Theists only. Outside these there is a very large mass of Americans who are certainly not Christians, although so reckoned in the above figures. Mr. Pearson says: "The Emerson school, which numbers many disciples in our land, is unquestionably Pantheistic. Emerson himself, with all his gorgeous mysticism, is a Pantheist" (p. 34).

Besides these exceptions, there are also, throughout the world, many persons without any religion at all, and a larger number still whose views on religion are utterly at variance with either Christianity, Mahomedanism, Buddhism, Brahminism, or Judaism. These probably are estimated above amongst the "Nondescripts."

In answer to the frequently-repeated allegation, that even the most savage peoples have some religion, it is sufficient to cite the following cases:—

"The Mincopies, or inhabitants of the Andaman Islands, have been described by Dr. Mouatt and Professor Owen, who consider that they 'are, perhaps, the most primitive or lowest in the scale of civilisation of the human race.'..... They have no idea of a Supreme Being, no religion, nor any belief in a future state of existence" ("Pre-historic Times," by Sir Jno. Lubbock, pp. 345—6).

The natives of Australia "have no religion, nor any idea of prayer," says the same writer; but as he adds, "most of them believe in evil spirits," we presume that he meant that they had no belief in a Supreme Being (p. 353).

The Tasmanians are described by the Rev. T. Dove as distinguished "by the absence of all moral views and impressions. Every idea bearing on our origin and destiny as rational beings seems to have been erased from their

breasts" (p. 465). When the Rev. T. Dove says that the idea has been erased, he merely means that he found no trace of any such idea.

The Samoans "had no religion" (p. 357).

"According to Crantz, the Greenland Esquimaux have neither a religion nor idolatrous worship, nor so much as any ceremonies to be perceived tending towards it" (p. 409).

The following tribes of Indians had not "any ideas of religion:" "Charruas, Minuanas, Aucas, Guarany, Guayanas, Nalicuégas, Guasarapos, Guatos, Ninaquiguilas, Guanás, Lenguas, Aguilots, Mocobys, Abissons, and Paraguas" (p. 427).

"According to the Missionaries, neither the Patagonians nor the Auracians had any ideas of prayer, or any vestige of religious worship" (p. 431).

Of the inhabitants of Tierra Del Fuego, Adolph Decker says: "There is not the least spark of religion or policy to be observed amongst them" (p. 432). "Like Decker, Admiral Fitzroy never witnessed, or heard, any act of a decidedly religious nature" (p. 437).

After making various statements showing the intellectual inferiority of savages, Sir John Lubbock says (p. 467): "It has been asserted over and over again that there is no race of men so degraded as to be entirely without a religion—without some idea of a Deity. So far from this being true, the very reverse is the case. Many, we might almost say all, of the most savage races are, according to the nearly universal testimony of travellers, in this condition." Burton states that some of the tribes in the Lake districts of Central Africa "admit neither God, nor angel, nor devil" (p. 468). "In the Pellew Islands Wilson found no religious buildings nor any sign of religion.....Some of the tribes (of Brazilian Indians), according to Bates and Wallace, were entirely without religion. The Yenadies and the Villees are, according to Dr. Short, without any belief in a future state. Captain Grant could find no distinct form of religion in some of the comparatively civilised tribes visited by him. And again Hooker tells us that the Lepchas of Northern India have no religion" (p. 468). "It is evident," says M. Bik, "that the Arafuras of Vockay (one of the Southern Arus) possess no religion whatever. Of the immortality of the soul they have not the least conception" ("Origin of Civilisation," Sir J. Lubbock, p. 122).

"Among the Koossa Kaffirs, Lichtenstein affirms that



there is no appearance of any religious worship whatever" (p. 123).

"It might be the proper time now," says Father Baegert, "to speak of the form of government and the religion of the Californians previous to their conversion to Christianity, but neither the one nor the other existed among them.....Religious worship or ceremonies were unknown to them, and they neither believed in the true and only God, nor adored false deities.....I made diligent inquiries amongst those with whom I lived, to ascertain whether they had any conception of God, a future life, and their own souls, but I never could discover the slightest trace of such a knowledge. Their language has no words for 'God' and 'Soul'" (p. 124).

"Several tribes," says Robertson, "have been discovered in America which have no idea whatever of a Supreme Being, and no rites of religious worship" (p. 124).

It is denied ("Encyclopédie Générale," article, Athées Peuples) that the islanders of Molugues and New Guinea have any idea of God. Sir J. Emerson Tennant affirms that the Veddahs of Ceylon have no idols, no altars, no religion, no prayers, no knowledge of God, no conception of future life. This is confirmed by Bailey, who resided a long time amongst these people. After a residence of many years in Australia Dr. Aram affirms that the Aborigines near Cape York were utterly destitute of any religion until they had been taught by the Europeans ("Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie," 1868, quoted in "Encyclopédie Générale").

Sir Samuel Baker says that the indigenous races of Ounyoró have no idea of God or of a future state, and that they worship nothing. The Obbos are in the same state; and an interesting conversation between Sir Samuel Baker and Commoro, King of the Latoukas, shows that the Latouka had not even a superstitious sentiment or any conception by which Sir Samuel Baker could explain to him any religious idea (same authority).

Moffat, the missionary who passed twenty-three years in Southern Africa, affirms that the Caffres, the Bechuanas, the Hottentots, and the Bushmen were utterly without any kind of religious notions except after having had communication with the Europeans. M. Casalis confirms this as to the Bassoutos, a Bechuanan tribe.

Not only do we find so many peoples entirely without religion, but we also find "that religion, as understood by

the lower savage races, differs essentially from ours ; nay, it is not only different, but even opposite. Thus then the deities are evil, not good ; they may be forced into compliance with the wishes of man ; they require bloody, and rejoice in human, sacrifices ; they are mortal not immortal ; a part of, not the author of, nature ; they are to be approached by dances rather than by prayers ; and often approve what we call vice, rather than what we esteem as virtue" ("Origin of Civilisation," Sir J. Lubbock, p. 116). He urges that "Hitherto it has been usual to classify religions according to the nature of the object worshipped ; Fetichism, for instance, being the worship of inanimate bodies, Sabæism that of the heavenly bodies. The true test, however, seems to me to be the estimate in which the Deity is held. The first great stages in religious thought may, I think, be regarded as—

"Atheism ; understanding by this term, not a denial of the existence of a Deity, but an absence of any definite ideas on the subject.

"Fetichism ; the stage in which man supposes that he can force the Deity to comply with his desires.

"Nature-worship, or Totemism ; in which natural objects, trees, lakes, stones, animals, &c., are worshipped.

"Shamanism ; in which the superior deities are more powerful than man, and of a different nature. Their place of abode is also far away, and accessible only to Shamans.

"Idolatry, or Anthropomorphism ; in which the gods take still more completely the nature of men, being, however, more powerful. They are still amenable to persuasion ; they are a part of nature, and not creators. They are represented by images or idols.

"In the next stage the Deity is regarded as the author, not merely a part, of nature. He becomes for the first time a really supernatural being."

All these stages, except the first, we should include in the "first stage," "the theological state," of M. Auguste Comte, who says (chap. 1, Positive Philosophy, Harriet Martineau's translation) : "In the theological state, the human mind, seeking the essential nature of beings, the first and final causes (the origin and purpose) of all effects—in short, absolute knowledge—supposes all phenomena to be produced by the immediate action of supernatural beings."

"In the metaphysical state, which is only a modification of the first, the mind supposes, instead of supernatural



beings, abstract forces, veritable entities (that is, personified abstractions) inherent in all beings, and capable of producing all phenomena. What is called the explanation of phenomena is, in this stage, a mere reference of each to its proper entity."

"In the final, the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of these laws,—that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge. What is now understood when we speak of an explanation of facts is simply the establishment of a connection between single phenomena and some general facts, the number of which continually diminishes with the progress of science.

The great confusion of thought and looseness of language common to religious writers is admirably illustrated by the declaration of the Rev. Dr. J. Pye Smith ("First Lines of Christian Theology," p. 108) that "indeed, the difference between a Deist and an Atheist is practically very inconsiderable." It is in truth only the difference between recognising a God and not recognising any God, and this the great Christian controversialist thought a "very inconsiderable" difference. The variety of religions amongst different peoples arises as Mr. Henry Buckle puts it: "A very ignorant people will, by virtue of their ignorance, incline towards a religion full of marvels, a religion which boasts of innumerable gods, and which ascribes every occurrence to the immediate authority of those gods. On the other hand, a people whose knowledge makes them better judges of evidence, and who are accustomed to that most difficult task, the practice of doubting, will require a religion less marvellous, less obtrusive, one that taxes their credulity less heavily" ("History of Civilisation," vol. i., p. 254).

Speaking of David Hume's "Natural History of Religion" Mr. Buckle says (vol. iii., p. 345): "The object of Hume in writing it was to ascertain the origin and progress of religious ideas; and he arrives at the conclusion, that the worship of many gods must, everywhere, have preceded the worship of one god. This he regards as a law of the human mind, a thing not only that always has happened, but that always must happen. His proof is entirely speculative. He argues that the earliest state of man is necessarily

a savage state; that savages can feel no interest in the ordinary operations of nature, and no desire to study the principles which govern those operations; that such men must be devoid of curiosity on all subjects which do not personally trouble them; and that, therefore, while they neglect the usual events of nature, they will turn their minds to the unusual ones. A violent tempest, a monstrous birth, excessive cold, excessive rain, sudden and fatal diseases, are the sort of things to which the attention of the savage is confined, and of which alone he desires to know the cause. Directly he finds that such causes are beyond his control, he reckons them superior to himself; and being incapable of abstracting them, he personifies them; he turns them into deities; polytheism is established; and the earliest creed of mankind assumes a form which can never be altered as long as men remain in this condition of pristine ignorance."

E. B. Tylor, treating on the use of idols, says: "The idol answers to the savage in one province of thought, the same purpose that its analogue the doll does to the child. It enables him to give a definite existence and a personality to the vague ideas of higher beings, which his mind can hardly grasp without some material aid.....It does not appear that idols accompany religious ideas down to the lowest levels of the human race, but rather that they belong to a period of transition and growth.....It does not seem, indeed, that the growth of the use of images may be taken as any direct measure of the growth of religious ideas, which is complicated with a multitude of other things. But it seems that when man has got some way in developing the religious element in him, he begins to catch at the device of setting a puppet or a stone as the symbol and representative of the notions of a higher being which are floating in his mind. He sees in it, as a child does in a doll, a material form which his imagination can clothe with all the attributes of a being which he has never seen, but of whose existence and nature he judges by what he supposes to be its works. He can lodge it in the place of honour, cover it up in the most precious garments, propitiate it with offerings such as would be acceptable to himself" ("Early History of Mankind," p. 110).

What is the religious sentiment for which so much is claimed, which is so often named, so little explained? In a savage it is the result of the prostration of the yet untrained intellect at the threshold of the unknown. In a St. Augustin it is still



the prostration of the intellect on the same threshold. The "religious sentiment" is neither less nor greater than the area within which—either from inherited pre-disposition to habit-thought, or from intellectual incompetence—no inquiry is made, and where "God" is the symbol-word used, in lieu of all research, as the answer to all inquiry from without.

What is religion? Mr. John Stuart Mill says: "We venture to think that a religion may exist without belief in a God;" and in answer to the question, "What are the conditions necessary to constitute a religion?" he responds: "There must be a creed, or conviction, claiming authority over the whole of human life; a belief, or set of beliefs, deliberately adopted, respecting human destiny and duty, to which the believer inwardly acknowledges that all his actions ought to be subordinate. Moreover, there must be a sentiment connected with this creed, or capable of being invoked by it, sufficiently powerful to give it, in fact, the authority over human conduct, to which it lays claim in theory;" and "if a person has an ideal object, his attachment and sense of duty towards which are able to control and discipline all his other sentiments and propensities, and prescribe to him a rule of life, that person has a religion" ("Auguste Comte and Positivism," p. 133).

Disagreeing almost entirely with Mr. Mill on this head, we venture to affirm that the word religion must always be taken, and except in the case of the Positivists has always been taken, to involve some assertion of the supernatural. That the creed accepted on authority must, if it be entitled to be classed as religious, contain affirmations admittedly incapable of verification by experience, and that Saint Augustin, in his "Confessions," is here a truer exponent of religion than Mr. Mill in his presentation of what the Positivists call "the religion of humanity." In his essay on the "Utility of Religion," Mr. Mill does identify religion with belief in the supernatural.

Mr. H. G. Atkinson writes to Miss Martineau ("Man's Nature and Development," Letter XX., p. 229): "He who does not suppose a personal god, or look for a future, may, nevertheless, be most unselfish and deeply religious; so religious, that he shrinks from all the forms of worship, because he sees in them all but forms of worship—forms of fancy, and not the spirit of truth. There are thousands upon thousands who have no clear knowledge on any one question relating to their religion."



In Auguste Comte's "Catechism of Religion," Conversation 1, we find the woman saying to the Positivist priest: "Your doctrine rejects every form of belief in a supernatural power: why do you persist in calling it a religion?" And the Positivist priest answers that the term religion "has no necessary connection with any opinions whatever.....In itself it expresses the state of perfect unity which is the distinctive mark of man's existence, both as an individual and in society, when all the constituent parts of his nature, moral as well as physical, are made habitually to converge towards one common purpose.....Religion, then, consists in regulating each one's individual nature, and forms the rallying point for all the separate individuals."

This is a meaning given to the word religion by M. Comte, but it is not a meaning which many religious people would accept outside the ranks of his own disciples.

M. Auguste Comte repudiates "all philosophical or historical connection between Positivism and what is called Atheism," but scarcely does justice to Atheism. He says that the tendency of Atheism "is to prolong the metaphysical stage indefinitely by continuing to seek for new solutions of theological problems, instead of setting aside all inaccessible researches on the ground of their utter inutility" ("System of Positive Polity," vol. i., p. 36, Dr. Bridge's translation).

Dr. Congreve, the authorised English exponent of Positivism, says: "It is by sympathy, by the due training and encouragement of the sympathetic instincts, that man attains victory over his selfish personality, and constitutes his inward unity in the only way in which it is reconcilable with the service of others. And I believe that the older faith of our earlier years was right in thinking that this internal unity was unattainable, except in submission, in the recognition of some external power, some power outside and above the individual; that it was with reason that the love of God was made the first and great commandment. We change the language, but keep the truth it embodied. The power outside and above the individual is for us Humanity; and in the love and service of Humanity must we find that motor force which can secure the triumph of our altruistic over our self-regarding nature" ("Essays: Political, Social, and Religious," p. 363).

Louis de Blois ("Le Directeur des Ames Religieuses," chapter i.), in the sixteenth century, takes the extreme

opposite, where he affirms that, to enter into a religious order, "C'est afin de mourir au monde et à vous-même ; c'est afin de ne vivre que pour Dieu seul." That is, that in devoting oneself to religion, one becomes dead to the world and to oneself, and lived for God alone. This renunciation of the world in accepting religion is formally embodied, though in milder language, in the Church of England renunciation of the "poms and vanities of this wicked world." Dr. John Pye Smith observes that "religion is a sense of the relation between ourselves and the absolutely perfect being, the Deity, and of the duties and expectations thence arising ;" and defines religion as—1. "Theology in its most general acceptation—the declarations of fact upon which religion is built as the just consequence." 2. "Natural theology : those principles of knowledge concerning the attributes and government of the Deity which the human mind is naturally competent to discover, by observation, reflection, and inference." 3. "Revealed, and particularly Christian, theology—the principles of knowledge concerning the attributes and government of God, and their connections and consequences, which are either assumed or disclosed by the declarations of a positive revelation" ("First Lines of Christian Theology," book i., chap. i.). He also (chap. ii.) defines Natural Religion to be "such opinions on the method of honouring Deity and obtaining his favour as may be acquired by human research and reasoning, without any Divine revelation."

A writer in the *Westminster Review* (vol. xcvi., p. 457) says : "Every religion is an attempt to solve the mystery of things, to furnish an explanation, not only of the physical world about us, but also of that moral world which reveals itself to the introverted gaze. The religion of the savage has few or no moral elements in it, because his own moral nature has scarcely as yet glimmered upon his consciousness. But, as a race advances, it begins to crave for a solution of other questions than those connected with outward things, and its religion deepens in tone. Thenceforward we find religions serving the double purpose of a physical theory of the universe and an explanation of moral problems."

Thomas Pearson, in his prize essay on "Infidelity" (p. 5), includes the following amongst "the commonly-understood doctrines of natural and revealed religion"—viz., "The independent existence of one absolutely perfect Being, the

creator, preserver, and governor of all things; the doctrine of the Trinity, or of three persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

A writer in the *Quarterly Review* (vol. cix., p. 289), attacking the “Essays and Reviews,” says: “There can be no religious system which is not founded upon definite teaching as to God, and as to his relation to us. The very name of a theology testifies to man’s universal sense of this truth, even where it is held unconsciously and instinctively, and not reasoned out into a proposition. Even a false faith, if it is to be effectual at all, must rest upon a theology.”

Bishop Butler says “religion implies a future state” (“Analogy of Religion,” chap. i.).

The Duke of Argyll says: “M. Guizot’s affirmation, that belief in the supernatural is essential to all religion, is true only when it is understood in a special sense. Belief in the existence of a living will—of a personal god—is indeed a requisite condition” (“Reign of Law,” p. 51).

On the whole, then, as all believers in God include in the word “religion” some belief in a Deity, and as they certainly have a prior claim to the term, it appears to me to be wiser, franker, more honest, to avoid using an old word in a new sense, and thus to prevent the certainty of misconception on the part of those around us.

It should be clearly and specially insisted by Freethinkers that the words used by theologians should have their meanings clearly and definitely stated, and that the definitions should be such as can be tested by the records of experience. In dealing with God and his attributes, it is intended here to argue from the commonly-received meaning of words; although orthodox speakers and writers often write of God’s love, goodness, benevolence, mercy, or justice, and then object to having to defend acts in contradiction of the ordinary sense of those words.

It is contended by some that God, being infinite, cannot at all be judged by finite man, and that, therefore, when any matters are alluded to as being inconsistent with Divine power, wisdom, or goodness, we are to consider that these attributes, alleged to exist in God, are not liable to criticism by man. It is on this point that John Stuart Mill specially conflicted with Mr. Mansel (see “Examination of Sir W. Hamilton,” p. 121).

“It is a fact,” says Mr. Mansel (“Limits of Religious



Thought," preface to 4th edition, p. 13), "which experience forces upon us, and which it is useless were it possible to disguise, that the representation of God after the model of the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving, is not sufficient to account for all the phenomena exhibited by the course of his natural providence. The infliction of physical suffering, the permission of moral evil, the adversity of the good, the prosperity of the wicked, the crimes of the guilty, involving the misery of the innocent, the tardy appearance and partial distribution of moral and religious knowledge in this world—these are facts which, no doubt, are reconcilable, we know not how, with the infinite goodness of God, but which certainly are not to be explained on the supposition that its sole and sufficient type is to be found in the finite goodness of man." "In other words," replies Mr. Mill, "it is necessary to suppose that the infinite goodness ascribed to God is not the goodness which we know and love in our fellow creatures, distinguished only as infinite in degree, but is different in kind, and another quality altogether. When we call the one finite goodness, and the other infinite goodness, we do not mean what the words assert, but something else; we intentionally apply the same name to things which we regard as different. Accordingly, Mr. Mansel combats, as a heresy of his opponents, the opinion that infinite goodness differs only in degree from finite goodness..... When we mean different things we have no right to call them by the same name, and to apply to them the same predicates, moral and intellectual. Language has no meaning for the words just, merciful, benevolent, save that in which we predicate them of our fellow creatures; and, unless that is what we intend to express by them, we have no business to employ the words. If, in affirming them of God, we do not mean to affirm these very qualities, differing only as greater in degree, we are neither philosophically nor morally entitled to affirm them at all.....What belongs to it (infinite goodness), either as absolute or infinite, I do not pretend to know, but I know that infinite goodness must be goodness, and that what is not consistent with goodness, is not consistent with infinite goodness. If in ascribing goodness to God, I do not mean what I mean by goodness; if I do not mean the goodness of which I have some knowledge, but an incomprehensible attribute of an incomprehensible substance, which, for aught I know, may be a totally

different quality from that which I love and venerate ; what do I mean by calling it goodness ? and what reason have I for venerating it ? If I know nothing about what the attribute is, I cannot tell that it is a proper object of veneration. To say that God's goodness may be different in kind from man's goodness, what is it but saying, with a slight change of phraseology, that God may possibly not be good ? To assert in words what we do not think in meaning is as suitable a definition as can be given of a moral falsehood. Besides, suppose that certain attributes are ascribed to the Deity in a religion, the external evidences of which are so conclusive to my mind as effectually to convince me that it comes from God ; unless I believe God to possess the same moral attributes which I find in, however inferior a degree, in a good man, what ground of assurance have I of God's veracity ? All trust in a revelation presupposes a conviction that God's attributes are the same, in all but degree, with the best human attributes.

“If, instead of the ‘ glad tidings,’ that there exists a being in whom all the excellences which the highest human mind can conceive, exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his government, except that the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving does not sanction them ; convince me of it and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which I express and affirm the highest human morality, I say, in plain terms, that I will not. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do ; he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good who is not what I mean, when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures ; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.”

“Neither is this to set up my own limited intellect as a criterion of divine or any other wisdom. If a person is wiser and better than myself, not in some unknown and unknowable meaning of the terms, but in their known human acceptation, I am ready to believe that what this person thinks may be true, and what he does may be right, when, but for the opinion I have of him, I should think otherwise. But this is because I believe that he and I have

at bottom the same standard of truth and rule of right, and that he probably understands better than I the facts of the particular case. If I thought it not improbable that his notion of right might be my notion of wrong, I should not defer to his judgment. In like manner, one who sincerely believes in an absolutely good ruler of the world, is not warranted in disbelieving any act ascribed to him, merely because the very small part of its circumstances, which we can possibly know, does not sufficiently justify it. But if what I am told respecting him is of a kind which no facts that can be supposed added to my knowledge could make me perceive to be right ; if his alleged ways of dealing with the world are such as no imaginable hypothesis respecting things known to him and unknown to me, could make consistent with the goodness and wisdom which I mean when I use the terms, but are in direct contradiction to their signification, then, if the law of contradiction is a law of human thought, I cannot both believe these things, and believe that God is a good and wise being " (" Examination of Sir William Hamilton," p. 123).

Another word in very common use among theologians in dealing with the God question is the word "creation;" here, again, a strict definition is needed. Sir William Hamilton says (" Discussions on Philosophy," p. 609): "When aware of a new appearance, we are utterly unable to conceive that therein has originated any new existence, and are, therefore, constrained to think that what now appears to us under a new form, had previously an existence under others—others conceivable by us or not. These others (for they are always plural) are called its cause ; and a cause, or more properly causes, we cannot but suppose : for a cause is simply everything, without which the effect would not result, and all such concurring the effect cannot but result. We are utterly unable to construe it in thought as possible that the complement of existence has been either increased or diminished. We cannot conceive, on the one hand, nothing becoming something, or, on the other, something becoming nothing."

The words "creation" and "destruction" have no value, except as applied to phenomena. You may destroy a sovereign by melting, but you do not destroy the metal. You may dissolve the metal gold, but you have only destroyed the condition, not the substance. Creation and destruction are the loosely-worded equivalents for change.



The Rev. Baden Powell, in his essay on the "Study of the Evidences of Christianity" ("Essays and Reviews," p. 166), speaking of organic life, says: "Creation is only another name for our ignorance of the mode of production."

The word "matter" is one to which many absurd meanings have been given by theologians. It is here only used in exactly the sense in which Mr. J. S. Mill uses "nature." He says ("Three Essays," p. 5): "As the nature of any given thing is the aggregate of its powers and properties, so Nature in the abstract is the aggregate of the powers and properties of all things. Nature means the sum of all phenomena, together with the causes which produce them; including not only all that happens, but all that is capable of happening; the unused capabilities of causes being as much a part of the idea of nature as those which take effect." George Henry Lewes, in his "Problems of Life and Mind" (vol. ii., p. 262), defines matter as "the felt," and force as "activity of the felt." Poisson says: "La matière est tout ce qui peut affecter nos sens d'une manière quelconque." Matter is all that we can in any manner sense. Mr. Lewes adds (p. 264): "Matter is the symbol of all the known properties, statical and dynamical, passive and active—*i.e.*, subjectively, as feeling and change of feeling; or objectively, as agent and action." Dr. Priestley says: "It has generally been supposed that there are two distinct kinds of substance in human nature, and they have been distinguished by the terms matter, and spirit, or mind. The former of these has been said to be possessed of the property of extension—*viz.*, of length, breadth, and thickness, and also of solidity or impenetrability, and consequently of a *vis inertiae*; but it is said to be naturally destitute of all other powers whatever. The latter has of late been defined to be a substance entirely destitute of all extension, or relation to space, so as to have no property in common with matter; and therefore to be properly immaterial, but to be possessed of the powers of perception, intelligence, and self-motion. Matter is alleged to be that kind of substance of which our bodies are composed, whereas the principle of perception and thought belonging to us is said to reside in a spirit, or immaterial principle, intimately united to the body; while higher orders of intelligent beings, and especially the Divine Being, are said to be purely immaterial. It is maintained that neither matter nor spirit (meaning by the latter the subject of sense

and thought) correspond to the definitions above mentioned. For that matter is not that inert substance that it has been supposed to be ; that powers of attraction or repulsion are necessary to its very being, and that no part of it appears to be impenetrable to other parts ; I therefore define it to be a substance possessed of the property of extension, and powers of attraction or repulsion ; and since it has never yet been asserted that the powers of sensation and thought are incompatible with these (solidity or impenetrability, and, consequently, a *vis inertiae*, only having been thought to be repugnant to them), I therefore maintain that we have no reason to suppose that there are in man two substances so distinct from each other as have been represented. It is likewise maintained that the notion of two substances that have no common property, and yet are capable of intimate connection and mutual action, is absurd."

M. Emanuel Briard says ("La Pensée Nouvelle," 1ère année, No. 36), "Un mode d'existence est inséparable de l'existence elle-même. Le monde existe, il existe d'une certaine manière, de la manière que nous voyons. Qu'est-ce que cela peut prouver en faveur d'une Providence?..... Pour pouvoir affirmer qu'il y a de l'ordre dans la nature, il faudrait pouvoir comparer la nature à quelque chose d'autre, ce qui est impossible, puisque tout est dans la nature..... Quand donc vous dites : il y a de l'ordre dans la nature, vous ne faites que reporter à la nature l'idée que vous en avez tirée ; vous dites seulement ceci, la nature est comme elle est." "A mode of existence is inseparable from existence itself. The universe exists, it exists in a certain manner, the manner we see. What can this prove in favour of a Providence? To be able to affirm that there is order in nature, you should be able to compare nature with something else, which is impossible, because everything is in nature. When, therefore, you say there is order in nature, all you do is to attribute to nature the idea you have drawn from nature. You only say, that nature is as she is."

From the pretended "general consent of mankind" to the affirmation of Theism, it is alleged that there is in man an innate idea, an intuitive perception, an instinctive sense of Deity. We challenge the existence of the general consent except as an imperfect thought-growth varying amongst all peoples. We utterly deny any ideas which are not the results of perception or reflection on perception ; we deny

intuition except in the sense in which it is used by Mr. George Henry Lewis ("Problems of Life and Mind," vol. 1., p. 373): "We call judgment *intuitive* when the relations seem to embody experiences which are not specified or cannot now be specified, although originally they were capable of being so." "The conclusion which is seen so rapidly that its premisses are but faintly or nor at all recognised, is said to be seen intuitively; it is an organised judgment." In this sense alone we accept the word intuition, and we reject instinctive sense, except so far as by it is intended inherited predisposition.

Baron D'Holbach says: "If a faithful account was rendered of man's ideas upon the divinity, he would be obliged to acknowledge, that for the most part the word gods has been used to express the concealed, remote, unknown causes of the effects he witnessed; that he applies this term when the spring of natural, the source of known causes ceases to be visible; as soon as he loses the thread of these causes, or as soon as his mind can no longer follow the chain, he solves the difficulty, terminates his research, by ascribing it to his gods; thus giving a vague definition to an unknown cause, at which either his idleness, or his limited knowledge, obliges him to stop. When, therefore, he ascribes to his gods the production of some phenomenon, the novelty or the extent of which strikes him with wonder, but of which his ignorance precludes him from unravelling the true cause, or which he believes the natural powers, with which he is acquainted, are inadequate to bring forth, does he, in fact, do anything more than substitute for the darkness of his own mind a sound to which he has been accustomed to listen with reverential awe? Ignorance may be said to be the inheritance of the generality of men; these attribute to their gods, not only those uncommon effects that burst upon their senses with an astounding force, but also the most simple events; the causes of which are the most easy to be known to whoever shall be willing to meditate upon them. In short, man has always respected those unknown causes, those surprising effects, which his ignorance prevented him from fathoming"—(Mirabaud's "System of Nature," vol. ii., cap. 1).

And again (cap. 4): "The unanimity of man, in acknowledging the Divinity, is commonly looked upon as the strongest proof of his existence. There is not, it is said, any people on the earth who have not some ideas, whether



true or false, of an all-powerful agent who governs the world. The rudest savages, as well as the most polished nations, are equally obliged to recur by thought to the first cause of everything that exists ; thus it is affirmed the cry of nature herself ought to convince us of the existence of the Godhead : of which she has taken pains to engrave the notion in the minds of men : they therefore conclude that the idea of God is innate."

"If, disengaged from prejudice, we analyse this proof, we shall see that the universal consent of man, so diffused over the earth [and which later experiences enable us to say is not so universal as D'Holbach conceded] actually proves little more than that he has been in all countries exposed to frightful revolutions, experienced disasters, been sensible to sorrows, of which he has mistaken the physical causes ; that those events to which he has been either the victim or the witness have called forth his admiration, or excited his fear ; that for want of being acquainted with the powers of nature, for want of understanding her laws, for want of comprehending her infinite resources, for want of knowing the effects she must necessarily produce under given circumstances, he has believed these phenomena were due to some secret agent, of which he has had vague ideas ; to beings whom he has supposed conducted themselves after his own manner, who were operated upon by similar motives with himself.

"The consent, then, of man in acknowledging a variety of gods proves nothing, except that in the bosom of ignorance he has either admired the phenomena of nature, or trembled under their influence ; that his imagination was disturbed by what he beheld or suffered ; that he has sought in vain to relieve his perplexity upon the unknown cause of the phenomena he witnessed, which frequently obliged him to quake with terror : the imagination of the human race has laboured variously upon these causes, which have almost always been incomprehensible to him : although everything confessed his ignorance, his inability to define these causes, yet he maintained that he was assured of their existence ; when pressed he spoke of a spirit ; a word to which it was impossible to attach any determinate idea ; which taught nothing but the sloth, which evidenced nothing but the stupidity of those who pronounced it."

"For the most part, the notions on the Divinity, which obtain even at the present day, are nothing more than a

general terror, diversely acquired, variously modified in the mind of nations: which do not tend to prove anything, save that they have received them from their trembling ignorant ancestors. These gods have been successively altered, decorated, subtilised, by those thinkers, those legislators, those priests, who have meditated deeply upon them; who have prescribed systems of worship to the uninformed; who have availed themselves of their existing prejudices, to submit them to their yoke; who have obtained a dominion over their mind, by seizing on their credulity; by making them participate in their errors; by working on their fears; these dispositions will always be a necessary consequence of man's ignorance, when steeped in the sorrows of his heart."

In treating the question of general consent, Mr. Mill points out ("Three Essays on Religion," p, 157) that "the religious belief of savages is not belief in the god of natural theology, but a mere modification of the crude generalisation, which ascribes life, consciousness, and will to all natural powers of which they cannot perceive the source or control the operation. And the divinities believed in are as numerous as those powers. Each river, fountain, or tree, has a divinity of its own. To see in this blunder of primitive ignorance the hand of the Supreme Being, implanting in his creatures an instinctive knowledge of his existence, is a poor compliment to the Deity. The religion of savages is Fetichism of the grossest kind, ascribing animation and will to individual objects, and seeking to propitiate them by prayer and sacrifice. That this should be the case is the less surprising, when we remember that there is not a definite boundary line, broadly separating the conscious human being from inanimate objects. Between these and man there is an intermediate class of objects, sometimes much more powerful than man, which do possess life and will, *i.e.*, the brute animals, which in an early stage of existence play a very great part in human life; making it the less surprising that the line should not at first be quite distinguishable between the animate and the inanimate part of nature. As observation advances, it is perceived that the majority of outward objects have all their important qualities in common with entire classes or groups of objects, which comport themselves exactly alike in the same circumstances; and in these cases the worship of visible objects is exchanged for that of an invisible being, supposed to preside

over the whole class. This step in generalisation is slowly made, with hesitation, and even terror; as we still see in the case of ignorant populations with what difficulty experience disabuses them of belief in the supernatural powers and terrible resentment of a particular idol. Chiefly by these terrors the religious impressions of barbarians are kept alive, with only slight modifications, until the Theism of cultivated minds is ready to take their place. And the Theism of cultivated minds, if we take their own word for it, is always a conclusion either from arguments called rational, or from the appearances in nature."

In the first chapter of his "Abregé de l'Origine de Tous les Cultes," Charles Francis Dupuis (born 16th October, 1742, died 29th September, 1809) says: "The word God appears destined to express the idea of the universal and eternally active force which gives motion to everything in nature, following the laws of a constant and admirable harmony, which develops itself in the diverse forms taken by organised matter, which mingles in all, animates all, and which seems to be one in its infinitely varied modifications, and to belong only to itself. This is the active force which the Universe, or that regular assemblage of all bodies linked together by an eternal chain, and rolling with a perpetual movement in the womb of space for unlimited time, contains within itself. It was in this vast and marvellous whole that man, from the moment that he desires to reason on the causes of his existence and preservation, as well as on the various effects which were produced and destroyed around him, was obliged from the first to place the sovereignly-powerful cause which evolved all, and into the womb of which all re-enters, to again evolve by a succession of new generations, and under different forms. This force being that of the Universe itself, the Universe was regarded as God, or the supreme and universal cause of all the effects it produced, and of which humanity was part. Behold the great God, the first or rather the only God, who has manifested himself to man through the veil of the matter which he animates, and which constitutes the vast body of the Divinity. Such is the name of the sublime inscription of the temple of Sais: 'I am all that has been, all that is, and all that shall be; and no mortal has yet lifted the veil which covers me.'"

"Theism or Monotheism is the belief in a single personal agent as the sole cause of all things" (*Westminster*



*Review*, vol. xcvi., p 456). The Theist says that God is a person, infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, all-perfect, Creator and Ruler of the Universe. The formula is on the face of it self-contradictory, and the word "God" may be fairly said to be used by the Theist as the solution of every problem which his experience does not enable him to solve.

The Atheist does not say "There is no God," but he says, "I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word 'God' is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me."

"If, however, God is affirmed to represent an existence which is distinct from the existence of which I am a mode, and which it is alleged is not the *noumenon*, of which the word 'I' represents only a speciality of *phenomena*, then I deny 'God,' and affirm that it is impossible 'God' can be. That is, I affirm that there is one existence, and deny that there can be more than one."

William Rathbone Greg says ("Enigmas of Life," preface, p. 5): "The question, when stated with that perfect unreserve which alone befits it, lies in a small compass. Of actual knowledge we have simply nothing. Those who believe in a creative spirit and ruler of the universe, are forced to admit that they can adduce no proofs or arguments cogent enough to compel conviction from sincere minds constituted in another mould. There are facts, indications, corollaries, which seem to suggest the great inference almost irresistibly to our minds. There are other facts, indications, corollaries, which to other minds seem as irresistibly to negative that inference. Data admitted by both appear of different weight to each. The difficulties in the way of either conclusion are confessedly stupendous. The difficulty of conceiving the eternal pre-existence of a personal creator I perceive to be *immense*; the difficulty of conceiving the origin and evolution of the actual universe, independently of such personal creator, I should characterise as insuperable."

[Mr. Greg does not tell why it is necessary to try to imagine the *origin* of the actual universe, nor does he show us that it is even possible to imagine such origin with an admittedly difficult conception of a personal creator super-added.]

“The Positivist, the devotee of pure science, would simply reverse the adjectives. We can neither of us turn the minor into the major difficulty for the other without altering the constitution of his intelligence. He does not say ‘there is no God;’ he merely says ‘I see no phenomena which irresistibly suggest one: I see many which negative the suggestion; and I have greater difficulty in conceiving all that the existence of such a being would involve than in the contrary assumption.’ I do not say ‘I know there is a God;’ I only say that I observe and infer much that forces that conviction upon me; but I recognise that these observations and inferences would not entitle me to demand the same conviction from him.”

The general outlines, and also the difficulties of the Theistic argument were fairly stated in an article in the *British Quarterly Review*, for July, 1871, p. 34, in reading which, however, it is necessary always to bear in mind that the writer is a Theist. He says: “We are limited to the well-known but precarious scheme of proofs *à priori* and *à posteriori*, and to the more accurate classification of Kant, the ontological, the cosmological, and the physico-theological proofs with his own argument from the moral faculty or practical reason.”

“The terms *à priori* and *à posteriori* are misleading. Arguments called *à priori* are usually mixed, and involve elements strictly *à posteriori*; experiential facts are inlaid within them. And the proof *à posteriori* ascends (if it ascends high enough) by the aid of *à priori* principles. In its rise to the supersensible, it makes use of the noetic principle of the reason.”

Dividing the Theistic theories into classes, the *British Quarterly Review* says: “The first class of theories are strictly *ontological* or onto-theological. They attempt to prove the objective existence of God from the subjective notion of necessary existence in the human mind, or from the assumed objectivity of space and time, which they interpret as the attributes of a necessary substance.”

“The second are the *cosmological* or *cosmo-theological* proofs. They essay to prove the existence of a supreme self-existent cause, from the mere fact of the existence of the world by the application of the principle of causality. Starting with the postulate of any single existence whatsoever, the world, or anything in the world, and proceeding to argue backwards or upwards, the existence of one supreme



cause is held to be 'a regressive inference' from the existence of these effects. As there cannot be, it is alleged, an infinite series of derived or dependent effects, we at length reach the infinite or uncaused cause. This has been termed the proof from contingency, as it rises from the contingent to the necessary; from the relative to the absolute. But the cosmological proof may have a threefold character, according as it is argued. 1, That the necessary is the antithesis of the contingent; or 2, That because some being now exists, some being must always have existed; or 3, That because we now exist, and have not caused ourselves, some cause adequate to produce us must also now exist."

"A third class of proofs are somewhat inaccurately termed physico-theological, a phrase equally descriptive of them and of these last mentioned. They are rather teleological or teleo-theological. The former proof started from any finite existence. It did not scrutinise its character, but rose from it to an absolute cause, by a direct mental leap or inference. This scrutinises the effect and [claims that it] finds traces of intelligence within it. It [alleges that it] detects the presence or the vestiges of mind in the particular effect it examines, viz., the phenomena of the world, and from them infers the existence of Deity. One branch of it is the argument from design, or adaptation in nature, the fitness of means to end, implying, it is said, an architect or designer. It may be called *Techno-Theology*, and is variously treated according as the technologist starts from human contrivance and reasons to nature, or starts from nature's products and reasons towards man. Another branch is the argument from the order of the universe, from the types or laws of nature, indicating, it is said, an orderer or law-giver, whose intelligence we thus discern. It is not in this case that the adjustment of means to ends proves the presence of a mind that has adjusted these. But the law itself, in its regularity and continuity, implies [it is contended] a mind behind it, an intelligence animating the otherwise soulless universe. It might be termed *nomo-theology* or *typo-theology*. Under the same general category may be placed the argument from animal instinct, which is distinct at once from the evidence of design, and that of law or typical order."

"The next class of arguments are based on the moral nature of man. They may be termed in general *ethico-theological*; and there are at least two main branches in this line of proof: 1. The argument from conscience, as a moral



law pointing to another above it.....It is [alleged to be] the moral echo within the soul of a voice louder and vaster without.....and as evidence it is direct and intuitive, not inferential. 2. The argument of Kant, is indirect and inferential, based upon the present phenomena of our moral nature. The moral law declares that the evil is punishable, and to be punished ; that virtue is rewardable, and to be rewarded ; but in this life they are not so : therefore, said Kant, there must be a futurity in which the rectification will take place, and a moral arbiter by whom it will be affected."

"Finally, there is the argument which, when philosophically unfolded, is, says the *British Quarterly Review*, the only unassailable stronghold of Theism, that of intuition." This is called eso-theological, or esoterico-theological, thus making the following chart of Theistic theories to be examined by the Freethinker :—

#### I. ONTO-THEOLOGICAL.

1. From necessary notion to reality.
  - a. Anselm's proof.
  - b. Descartes' first argument.
2. From space and time as attributes to their substance.

#### II. COSMO-THEOLOGICAL.

1. Antithetic.
2. Causal.
3. Sufficient reason (Leibnitz).

#### III. TELEO-THEOLOGICAL.

1. Techno-theology.
2. Typo-theology.
3. (Animal instinct).

#### IV. ETHICO-THEOLOGICAL.

1. Deonto-theological.
2. Indirect and inferential (Kant).

#### V. ESO-THEOLOGICAL.

1. The infinite (Fénélon, Cousin).
2. The world soul.
3. The instinct of worship.

The ontological argument is presented by St. Augustine in his various works, notably, in his "De Civitate Dei," City of God, and his "Confessions." St. Augustine was born 13th November, A.D. 354, at Tagaste, in Africa, and died at

Hippone, in Africa, on the 28th August, A.D. 430. A very weak notice of Augustine is given in Enfield's "History of Philosophy," book vi., chap. 3, and a summary of his position is given in Tenneman's "Manual of the History of Philosophy," sect. 232. Dr. J. Pye Smith gives a vivid picture of Augustine and his doctrines from a religious stand-point ("First Lines of Christian Theology," pp. 279 to 285). The best edition of his works was that made by the Benedictines, in the latter part of the 17th century. The translation of the Confessions used here is that of Arnault d'Andilly, republished at Paris in 1840 ("Choix d'Ouvrages Mystiques," par J. A. C. Buchon, book i.). Many portions of the Confessions are strongly Pantheistic. "By Le Clerc, Augustine is charged with being the first who advanced two doctrines which take away goodness and justice both from God and man; the one representing the Deity as dooming human beings to eternal torments for sins which they cannot avoid, and the other stirring up the civil magistrate to persecute those who differ from them in religion" (Gorton's "Biographical Dictionary").

Another advancer of the ontological argument is St. Anselm, born at Aosta, in Piedmont A.D. 1034, and died Archbishop of Canterbury, A.D. 1109. He has been called the second St. Augustine ("History of Modern Philosophy," by Victor Cousin, Lecture IX). His two last works, Monologium and Proslogium, contain his argument. In the first, "Monologue, or example of the manner in which one may account for his faith," Anselm supposes an ignorant man seeking truth by force of his reason only. "This mode, this plan, consists in drawing all theological truths from a single point, the essence of God, and the essence of God from the only ideal of beauty, of goodness, of grandeur, which all men possess, and which is the common measure of all that is beautiful. This ideal, this unity, must exist, for it is the necessary form of all that exists. Unity is anterior to plurality, and it is its root. This unity is God." One fatal objection to Anselm's Monologium is, that there is no such ideal of beauty, goodness, and grandeur common to all men. In his second work, Proslogium, Anselm supposes himself in the possession of the truth, and tries to demonstrate it. "The maddest Atheist has, in his thought, an idea of a sovereign good, above which he can conceive no other. This sovereign good cannot exist solely in the thought, for we might conceive a still greater. This

we cannot do, therefore this sovereign good exists out of the thought, therefore God exists." This, again, falls under the objection that no one has such an idea of a sovereign good." Dr. J. P. Smith refers to Anselm ("First Lines of Christian Theology," p. 106), and thus states his argument: "We can form an idea of an absolutely perfect being; but we should not have the capacity for doing so if such a being did not exist." This involves two errors: first, that "an idea of an absolutely perfect being" can be formed; and, second, that every idea in the mind must have its actual counterpart existent. An insane person's idea, that he is followed by a yellow dog, with six tails and four heads, would, in this case, require the admission of the actuality of the abnormal dog. The truth is that every supposed extra-natural being is only a compound of parts of natural beings, severed from their appropriate belongings; man's imaginative faculties cannot so transcend his experience as to enable him to create new materials; they can only recombine the old materials in new forms; and from the horns, hoofs, tails, shapes, of the animals around him, unicorns, devils, or dragons are moulded.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, arrayed in the same ranks, was born at Aquino, near Naples, in 1225, died in 1274, at Terracina, on the way to a general council at Lyons.

Descartes, also a maintainer of the ontological argument, was born in 1596, at La Haye, in Touraine; he died at Stockholm in 1650. The clearest and most accessible statement of his views is in Lewes's "Biographical History of Philosophy," vol. ii., p. 137. A somewhat different estimate of Descartes is given by Victor Cousin ("History of Modern Philosophy," Lecture II.). Treating on the application of the method of Descartes, Mr. Lewes says: "Interrogating his consciousness, he found that he had the idea of God; understanding by God a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, omniscient, omnipotent. This, to him, was as certain a truth as the truth of his own existence. I exist: not only do I exist, but exist as a miserably imperfect finite being, subject to change, greatly ignorant, and incapable of creating anything. In this, my consciousness, I find by my finitude that I am not the all; by my imperfection, that I am not the perfect. Yet an infinite and perfect Being must exist, because infinity and perfection are implied as correlatives in my ideas of imperfection and finitude. God, therefore, exists; his existence is clearly proclaimed



in my consciousness, and can no more be a matter of doubt, when fairly considered, than my own existence. The conception of an infinite being proves his real existence; for if there is not really such a being, I must have made the conception; but if I could make it, I could also unmake it, which evidently is not true; therefore, there must be, externally to myself, an archetype from which the conception was derived."

To this we reply, denying the conception, infinite is inconceivable, infinite is indefinite; to speak of idea of the infinite is to talk of idea of the indefinable, which is absurd (see Hobbes' "Leviathan," part i., chap. 3). "Whatever we imagine is finite. Therefore this is no idea or conception of anything we call infinite.....When we say anything is infinite, we signify only that we are not able to conceive, the ends and bounds of the thing named, having no conception of the thing but of our own inability."

"The ambiguity in this case," it has been remarked (Mill's "System of Logic," vol. ii., p. 447), "is the pronoun *I*, by which in one place is to be understood my *will*; in another, the laws of my nature. If the conception existing, as it does in my mind, had no original without, the conclusion would unquestionably follow that *I* had made it—that is, the laws of my nature must have spontaneously evolved it; but that my will made it would not follow. Now, when Descartes afterwards adds that I cannot unmake the conception, he means that I cannot get rid of it by an act of my will, which is true, but is not the proposition required. That what some of the laws of my nature have produced, other laws, or the same laws in other circumstances, might not subsequently efface, he would have found it difficult to establish" (Lewes's "History of Philosophy," vol. ii., p. 150).

"Descartes," writes the *British Quarterly Reviewer*, "was the most illustrious thinker who, at the dawn of modern philosophy, developed the scholastic Theism. While inaugurating a new method of experimental research, he nevertheless retained the most characteristic doctrine of mediæval ontology. He argues that necessary existence is as essential to the idea of an all-perfect being, as the equality of its three angles to the two right angles is essential to the idea of a triangle. But though he admits that his 'thought imposes no necessity on things,' he contradicts his own admission by adding, 'I cannot conceive God except as existing,

and hence it follows that existence is inseparable from him.' In his 'Principles of Philosophy' we find the following argument: 'As the equality of its three angles to two right angles is necessarily comprised in the idea of the triangle, the mind is firmly persuaded that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles; so from its perceiving necessary and eternal existence to be comprised in the idea which it has of an all-perfect being, it ought manifestly to conclude that this all-perfect being exists (part i., sec. 14). This argument is more formally expounded in his 'Reply to Objections to the Meditations,' thus: 'Proposition 1. The existence of God is known from the consideration of his nature alone—demonstration. To say that an attribute is contained in the nature, or in the concept of a thing, is the same as to say that this attribute is true of this thing, and that it may be affirmed to be in it. But necessary existence is contained in the nature or in the concept of God. Hence, it may be with truth affirmed, that necessary existence is in God, or that God exists.' A slight amount of thought will suffice to show that, in this elaborate array of argumentation, Descartes is the victim of a subtle fallacy. Our conception of necessary existence cannot include the fact of necessary existence, for one is an ideal concept of the mind, the other is a fact of a real existence. The one demands an object beyond the mind, the other does not. All that the Cartesian argument could prove, would be that the mental concept was necessary, not that the concept had a counterpart in the outer universe. It is, indeed, a necessary judgment that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, because this is an identical proposition; the subject and the predicate are the same, the one being only an expansion of the other. We cannot, therefore, destroy the predicate, and leave the subject intact. But it is otherwise when we affirm that any triangular object exists; we may then destroy the predicate existence, and yet leave the subject (the notion of the triangle) intact in the mind" (*British Quarterly Review*, No. cvii., p. 43).

Ralph Cudworth—born in Somerset 1617, died 1688, author of "The True Intellectual System of the Universe"—was a correspondent, and at one time an admirer, of Descartes (Tenneman's "Manual," p. 331; Cousin's "History of Modern Philosophy," p. 115; Buckle's "History of Civilisation," vol. iii., p. 348); and his writings are often

referred to by those who rely on "innate ideas." "Aiming at a unification of science, philosophy, and religion, he found it in the conception of a 'plastic nature,' as immediate cause and guide of all existence. Such a plastic nature avoided, to his mind, the difficulties of Atheism on the one hand, and of continued creation and Divine interference on the other. Without it, things must proceed with utter fortuitousness, or 'God himself doth all immediately, and, as it were, with his own hands, form the body of every gnat and fly.' He posited, therefore, a plastic nature, which, while devoid of consciousness and reason, subserved the final end and ultimate good of all existence. This plastic nature 'doth never consult or deliberate;' it 'goes on in one constant, unrepenting tenor, from generation to generation;' it 'acts artificially, and for the sake of ends,' but itself 'understands not the ends which it acts for;' it resembles 'habits which do in like manner gradually evolve themselves in a long train or series of regular and artificial motions, readily prompting the doing of them, without comprehending that art and reason by which they are directed;' it corresponds to those 'natural instincts that are in animals, which, without knowledge, direct them to act regularly in order, both to their own good and the good of the universe.' 'The plastic nature in the formation of plants and animals seems to have no animal fancy, no express consciousness of what it doth;' it is parallel to those 'nocturnal volutations in sleep,' those movements of the heart and lungs, over which we exercise no conscious influence. 'Wherefore, the plastic nature, acting neither by knowledge nor by animal fancy, neither electively nor hormetically, must be concluded to act fatally, magically, and sympathetically.' But this plastic nature Cudworth conceives as simply the subordinate instrument of higher power. 'Perfect knowledge and understanding, without consciousness, is nonsense and impossibility. If there be *physis*, there must be *nous*; if there be a plastic nature, that acts regularly and artificially in order to ends, and according to the best wisdom, though itself not comprehending the reason of it, not being clearly conscious of what it doth, then there must of necessity be a perfect mind or deity upon which it depends'" (*Westminster Review*, No. xcvi., p. 144, comparing Cudworth with Hartmann).

Cudworth advanced the three following propositions, which he regarded as the fundamentals or essentials of true



religion: "First, that all things in the world do not float without a head and governor; but that there is a God, an omnipotent understanding being presiding over all. Secondly, that this God, being essentially good and just, there is something in its own nature eternally just and unjust; and not by arbitrary will, law, and command only. And, lastly, that we are so far forth principals, or masters of our own actions, as to be accountable to justice for them, or to make us guilty and blameworthy for what we do amiss, and to deserve punishment accordingly." Cudworth was usually so fair in his treatment of his antagonists that many religious persons charged him with heresy, some even calling him Atheist. He says, in his "Intellectual System": "It does not follow, because God is incomprehensible to our finite and narrow understandings, that he is utterly inconceivable by them, so that they cannot frame any idea of them at all, and he may therefore be concluded to be a nonentity." But it does follow that, if the word God is incomprehensible, that then no one has a right to require another to accept the word God as representing some person whose existence is to be believed. "For," adds Cudworth, "it is certain that we cannot comprehend ourselves, and that we have not such an adequate and comprehensive knowledge of the essence of any substantial thing as that we can perfectly master and conquer it." In truth, all knowledge is relative; we have only the impressions the thing comprehended makes upon us, and we do not and cannot know it in itself. A table is a mode of substance; it is conditioned in thought by the characteristics, diversities of sensation, by which we are enabled to think it. The thing in itself (substance) we cannot ignore; but we do not comprehend, we know it only in its modes. Cudworth says we cannot comprehend ourselves; this is not exact; phenomenally, relatively, we can and do comprehend ourselves, but of God we have neither relative nor absolute knowledge. (See chapter on the Relativity of Human Knowledge, Mill's "Examination of Hamilton.") Cudworth goes on: "For even body itself, which the Atheists think themselves so well acquainted with, because they can feel it with their fingers—and which is the only substance that they acknowledge either in themselves or in the universe—hath such puzzling difficulties and entanglements in the speculation of it that they can never be able to extricate themselves from.....This is one badge of our creaturely

state, that we have not a perfectly comprehensive knowledge, or such as is adequate and commensurate to the essences of things; from thence we ought to be led to this acknowledgment, that there is another perfect mind or understanding being above us in the universe, from which our imperfect minds were derived, and upon which they do depend."

This argument of Cudworth's involves the assumption that a perfectly wise, good, and powerful person could and would make a person incapable of properly comprehending facts.

"Wherefore," continues Cudworth, "if we can have no idea or conception of anything, whereof we have not a full and perfect comprehension, then can we not have an idea or conception of the nature of any substance. But though we do not comprehend all truth, as if our minds were above it, or master of it, and cannot penetrate into, and look quite through the nature of everything, yet may rational souls frame certain ideas and conceptions of whatsoever is in the orb of being proportionate to their own nature and sufficient for their purpose. And though we cannot fully comprehend the Deity, nor exhaust the infiniteness of its perfection, yet we may have an idea of a being absolutely perfect." If Cudworth means some imaginary  $x$ , from which we in turn exclude all imperfections, this does not help him to a proof of God; and if he means that we have an incomplete idea of some particular being, of whom we know something, but whom we do not entirely know, but of whom we know enough to say that he is absolutely perfect, then it is denied that we "may have" any such "idea of a being absolutely perfect."

"Whatsoever," says Cudworth, "is in its own nature absolutely inconceivable, is nothing; but not whatsoever is not fully incomprehensible by our imperfect understandings." Admitting, then, that "the Deity is more incomprehensible to us than anything else whatsoever," he goes on: "The incomprehensibility of the Deity is so far from being an argument against the reality of its existence as that it is most certain, on the contrary, that were there nothing incomprehensible to us, who are but contemptible pieces and small atoms of the universe; were there no other beings in the world but what our finite understandings could span or fathom, and incompass roundabout, look through and through, and have a commanding view of, and perfectly conquer and subdue under them, then there could be

nothing absolutely and infinitely perfect—that is, no God.”

On the topic of the creation Cudworth writes : “ Because it is undeniably certain concerning ourselves, and all imperfect beings, that none of these can create any new substance, men are apt to measure all things by their own scantling, and to suppose it universally impossible for any power whatever thus to create. But since it is certain that imperfect beings can themselves produce some things out of nothing pre-existing, as new cogitations, new local motion, and new modifications of things corporeal, it is surely reasonable to think that an absolutely perfect being can do something more, that is, create new substances, or give them their whole being.” Here Cudworth is inaccurate ; “ cogitations ” are not “ things ; ” “ motion ” is not a thing, and the word create is improperly used. New modification is not the equivalent in analogy for origination of substance, and throughout the whole of Cudworth’s writing there is the fault common to writers in favour of Theism, that words are used with the most confusing disregard of their real value. He affirms “ that it may well be thought as easy for God, or an omnipotent being, to make a whole world, matter and all, as it is for us to create a thought or move a finger, or for the sun to send out rays, or a candle light ; or lastly, for an opaque body to produce an image of itself in a glass or water, or to project a shadow ; all these imperfect things being but the energies, rays, images, or shadows of the Deity.”

Henry More—born October 12th, 1614, died September, 1687—was educated in the same University with Cudworth, and maintained the same views. In his “ Antidote to Atheism ” Dr. More writes :—

“ When I say that I will demonstrate that there is a God, I do not promise that I will always produce such arguments that the reader shall acknowledge so strong, as he shall be forced to confess that it is utterly impossible that it should be otherwise ; but they shall be such as shall deserve full assent, and win full assent, from any unprejudiced mind.

“ For I conceive that we may give full assent to that which, notwithstanding, may possibly be otherwise ; which I shall illustrate by several examples : Suppose two men got to the top of Mount Athos, and there viewing a stone in the form of an altar with ashes on it, and the footsteps of men



on those ashes, or some words, if you will, as *Optimo Maximo*, or *To agnosto Theo*, or the like, written or scrawled out upon the ashes ; and one of them should cry out, Assuredly here have been some men that have done this. But the other, more nice than wise, should reply, Nay, it may possibly be otherwise ; for this stone may have naturally grown into this very shape, and the seeming ashes may be no ashes, that is, no remainders of any fuel burnt there ; but some unexplicable and unperceptible motions of the air, or other particles of this fluid matter that is active everywhere. have wrought some parts of the matter into the form and nature of ashes, and have fridged and played about so, that they have also figured those intelligible characters in the same. But would not anybody deem it a piece of weakness, no less than dotage, for the other man one whit to recede from his former apprehension, but as fully as ever to agree with what he pronounced first, notwithstanding this bare possibility of being otherwise ?

“So of anchors that have been digged up, either in plain fields or mountainous places, as also the Roman urns with ashes and inscriptions, as *Severianus Ful. Linus*, and the like, or Roman coins with the effigies and names of the Cæsars on them, or that which is more ordinary, the skulls of men in every churchyard, with the right figure, and all those necessary perforations for the passing of the vessels, besides those conspicuous hollows for the eyes and rows of teeth, the *os styloides*, *ethooides*, and what not. If a man will say of them, that the motions of the particles of the matter, or some hidden spermatic power, has gendered these, both anchors, urns, coins, and skulls, in the ground, he doth but pronounce that which human reason must admit is possible. Nor can any man ever so demonstrate that these coins, anchors. and urns were once the artifice of men, or that this or that skull was once a part of a living man, that he shall force an acknowledgment that it is impossible that it should be otherwise. But yet I do not think that any man, without doing manifest violence to his faculties, can at all suspend his assent, but freely and fully agree that this or that skull was once a part of a living man, and that these anchors, urns, and coins were certainly once made by human artifice, notwithstanding the possibility of being otherwise.

“And what I have said of assent is also true in dissent ; for the mind of man, nor crazed nor prejudiced, will fully

and irreconcilably disagree, by its own natural sagacity, where, notwithstanding, the thing that it doth thus resolvedly and undoubtedly reject, no wit of man can prove impossible to be true. As if we should make such a fiction as this—that Archimedes, with the same individual body that he had when the soldiers slew him, is now safely intent upon his geometrical figures under ground, at the centre of the earth, far from the noise and din of this world, that might disturb his meditations, or distract him in his curious delineations he makes with his rod upon the dust ; which no man living can prove impossible. Yet if any man does not as irreconcilably dissent from such a fable as this, as from any falsehood imaginable, assuredly that man is next door to madness or dotage, or does enormous violence to the free use of his faculties.”

Throughout this argument runs the fallacy, that because experience leads us to draw certain conclusions from certain appearances, therefore lack of experience should jump to conclusions from appearances different in kind : thus, because having seen men writing, we deduce the earlier presence of men from an inscription discovered, therefore, not having seen gods making worlds, we are to deduce the earlier presence of gods from worlds about us. It is a complete *non sequitur*. The last paragraph, relating to Archimedes, we leave to the refutation of those who believe that men are alive after they are dead.

Dr. Samuel Clarke—born at Norwich 1675, died 1729—is specially notable amongst the ontological advocates for his “ Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of a God,” in which Dugald Stewart thought that Dr. Clarke “ soared into regions where he was lost in the clouds.” William Gillespie (in the “ Necessary Existence of God,” p. 23) says that “ the Doctor’s demonstration is no more than a pretended one. It is wholly and evidently inconclusive.” This criticism from a very earnest Theist cannot be altogether disregarded by those amongst the pious who vaunt Dr. Clarke’s argument, which, taken from his Boyle lecture in 1704 on the Being and Attributes of God, is as follows :—

1. Something has existed from all eternity.
2. There has existed from eternity some one unchangeable and independent being.
3. That unchangeable and independent being, which has existed from eternity without any external cause of its existence, must be self-existent—that is, necessarily existing.



4. What the substance or essence of that being, which is self-existent, or necessarily existing, is, we have no idea, neither is it at all possible for us to comprehend it.

5. Though the substance or essence of the self-existent being is in itself absolutely incomprehensible to us, yet many of the essential attributes of his nature are strictly demonstrable, as well as his existence. Thus, in the first place, the self-existent being must of necessity be eternal.

6. The self-existent being must of necessity be infinite and omnipresent.

7. The self-existent being must of necessity be but one.

8. The self-existent and original cause of all things must be an intelligent being.

9. The self-existent and original cause of all things is not a necessary agent, but a being endued with liberty and choice.

10. The self-existent being, the supreme cause of all things, must of necessity have infinite power.

11. The supreme cause and author of all things must of necessity be infinitely wise.

12. The supreme cause and author of all things must of necessity be a being of infinite goodness, justice, and truth, and all other moral perfections, such as become the supreme governor and judge of the world.

A long examination of Dr. Clarke's argument will be found in the work by D'Holbach, known as Mirabaud's "System of Nature," vol. ii., chap. iv.

It will be noticed that having affirmed in No. 4 that we have no idea of the nature of the being alleged in No. 1, yet that in No. 5 Dr. Clarke uses the pronoun "his," converting the incomprehensible substance into a masculine person with a stroke of his pen. Nos. 6 and 7 are but one proposition, and they negate the "cause of all things" in No. 8, because if there be but "one" "infinite," there cannot be any "all things," unless in the No. 1 "something" is used in the absolute as "noumenon;" and in No 8 "all things" are used in the relative as "phenomena," in which case, they are only the "something" of No. 1 conditioned in the human mind. The added assumption that the cause "must be an intelligent being" has no meaning if by "intelligence" is to be understood the same of God as of man; and, if it is to be understood differently, then has no value until the different meaning is fixed. No. 9 opens up the whole freewill question, if "volition," used of



God, is to mean the same as volition used of man. But, used of God, liberty of choice negates No. 11. In choosing or selecting there is the weighing the advantages and disadvantages, and during the process of choosing, the moment of uncertainty as to which is best ; but with the "infinitely wise" such "choice" would be impossible. There can be no choice where the knowledge has been always complete, and therefore the determination never undetermined.

The argument used by Dr. Clarke to support his second proposition is that "either there has always existed some one unchangeable and independent being, from which all other beings that are or ever were in the universe, have received their original ; or else there has been an infinite succession of changeable and dependent beings produced from one another in endless progression without any original cause at all ;" and Dr. Clark describes the latter hypothesis as "so very absurd." This argument assumes too much, for it assumes, without any proof, "beings" that have been originated, as well as the unoriginated being, whose existence is to be demonstrated ; and it assumes, most carelessly, that the want of origin for an endless chain is a difficulty. If it be possible to conceive an endless chain, there is no room to talk of its beginning, nor can you pick it to pieces ; nor would the rejection of the endless chain demonstrate "the one independent being."

One of the latest amongst the *à priori* advocates is William Gillespie, whose works have recently been widely circulated, though we think his line of argument a very weak one. The propositions in his "Argument *à Priori*" for the being and attributes of a Great First Cause are :—

" 1. Infinity of extension is necessarily existing.

" 2. Infinity of extension is necessarily indivisible.

" *Corollary.*—Infinity of extension is necessarily immovable.

" 3. There is necessarily a being of infinity of extension.

" 4. The being of infinity of extension is necessarily of unity and simplicity.

" *Sub-proposition.*—The material universe is finite in extension.

" 5. There is necessarily but one being of infinity of expansion.

" *Part 2, Proposition 1.*—Infinity of duration is necessarily existing.

" 2. Infinity of duration is necessarily indivisible.

" *Corollary*.—Infinity of duration is necessarily immovable.

" 3. There is necessarily a being of infinity of duration.

" 4. The being of infinity of duration is necessarily of unity and simplicity.

" *Sub-proposition*.—The material universe is finite in duration.

" *Corollary*.—Every succession of substances is finite in duration.

" 5. There is necessarily but one being of infinity of duration.

" *Part 3, Proposition 1*.—There is necessarily a being of infinity of expansion and infinity of duration.

" 2. The being of infinity of expansion and infinity of duration is necessarily of unity and simplicity.

" *Division 2, Part 1*.—The simple sole being of infinity of expansion and of duration is necessarily intelligent and all-knowing.

" *Part 2*.—The simple sole being of infinity of expansion and of duration, who is all-knowing, is necessarily all-powerful.

" *Part 3*.—The simple sole being of infinity of expansion and of duration, who is all-knowing and all-powerful, is necessarily entirely free.

" *Division 3*.—The simple sole being of infinity of expansion and of duration, who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and entirely free, is necessarily completely happy.

" *Sub-proposition*.—The simple sole being of infinity of expansion and of duration, who is all-knowing, all-powerful, entirely free, and completely happy, is necessarily perfectly good."

The foregoing argument seeks to prove too much. It affirms one existence (God) infinite in extent and duration, and another entirely different and distinct existence (the material universe) finite in extent and duration. It therefore seeks to substantiate everything, and something more. Infinite signifies nothing more than indefinite. When a person speaks of infinite extension he can only mean to refer to the extension of something to which he has been unable to set limits. The mind cannot conceive extension *per se*, either absolute or finite. It can only conceive something extended. It might be impossible mentally to define the extension of some substance. In such a case its extension



would be indefinite; or, as Mr. Gillespie uses the word, infinite. No one can therefore possibly have any idea of infinity of extension. Yet it is upon the existence of such an idea, and on the impossibility of getting rid of it, that Mr. Gillespie grounds his first proposition. If the idea does not exist, the argument is destroyed at the first step. To this it has been replied: "The infinite and indefinite are not identical; the first refers to a positive attribute, the last simply indicates a negative deficiency—the want of a cognised boundary" (Debate between Iconoclast and W. H. Gillespie, p. 31). We rejoin that there is no such positive attribute. Attributes are of the conditioned.

Mr. Gillespie argues that it is utterly beyond the power of the human mind to conceive infinity of extension non-existent. It is utterly beyond the power of the human mind to conceive, in truth, infinity of extension at all, either existent or non-existent. Extension can only be conceived as quality of some mode of substance. It is possible to conceive various modes of substance extended. It is impossible in thought to either conceive or to limit the possible extension of substance. Mr. Gillespie having asserted that we cannot but believe that infinity of extension exists, proceeds to declare that it exists necessarily, and says, "everything, the existence of which we cannot but believe, is necessarily existing." Then, as we cannot but believe in the existence of the universe, or, to adopt Mr. Gillespie's phrase, the material universe, the material universe exists necessarily. If, by "anything necessarily existing," he means anything the essence of which involves existence, or the nature of which can only be considered as existent, then Mr. Gillespie, by demonstrating the necessary existence of the universe, refutes his own later argument, that God is its creator.

The whole of the propositions following the first fall if it falls. The second proposition is, that infinity of extension is necessarily indivisible. In dealing with this proposition, Mr. Gillespie talks of the *parts* of infinity of extension, and says that he means parts in the sense of partial consideration only. Now, not only is it denied that you can have any idea of infinity of extension, but it is also denied that infinity can be the subject of partial consideration. Mr. Gillespie's whole proof of this proposition is intended to affirm that the parts of infinity of extension are necessarily indivisible from each other. I have already denied the possibility of con-



ceiving infinity in parts; and, indeed, if it were possible to conceive infinity in parts, then that infinity could not be indivisible, for Mr. Gillespie says that, by indivisible, he means indivisible, either really or mentally. Now, each part of anything conceived is, in the act of conceiving, mentally separated from, either other parts of, or from the remainder of, the whole of which it is part. It is clearly impossible to have a partial consideration of infinity, because the part considered must be mentally distinguished from the unconsidered remainder, and, in that case, you have, in thought, the part considered finite, and the residue certainly limited, at least, by the extent of the part under consideration.

The argument in favour of the corollary to the second proposition is, that the parts of infinity of extension are necessarily immovable amongst themselves; but if there be no such thing as infinity of extension—that is, if extension be only a quality of condition, and not therefore infinite; if infinite mean only indefiniteness or illimitability, and if infinity cannot have parts, this argument goes for very little. The argument, that the parts of infinity of extension are immovable, is refuted by Mr. Gillespie's sub-proposition (4), that the parts of the material universe are movable and divisible from each other. He urges that a part of the infinity of extension or of its substratum must penetrate the material universe and every atom of it. But, if infinity can have no parts, no part of it can penetrate the material universe. If infinity have parts (which is absurd), and if some part penetrate every atom of the material universe, and if the part so penetrating be immovable, how can the material universe be considered as movable, and yet as penetrated in every atom by immovability? If penetrated be a proper phrase, then, at the moment when the part of infinity was penetrating the material universe, the part of infinity so penetrating must have been in motion. There is either no penetration, or there is no immovability.

In his argument for proposition 5, Gillespie says that "any one who asserts that he can suppose two or more necessarily existing beings, each of infinity of expansion, is no more to be argued with than one who denies, Whatever is, is." Why is it more difficult to suppose this, than to suppose one being of infinity, and, in addition to this infinity, a material universe? If it be replied that you cannot conceive two distinct and different beings occupying the same point at the same moment, then it must be impossible to

conceive the material universe and God existing together. Any argument which proves that two infinities cannot co-exist negates also the possibility of the co-existence of an infinite and the finite.

Having demonstrated to his own satisfaction an infinite substance, and also having assumed in addition a finite substance, and having called the first, infinite "being"—perhaps from a devout objection to speak of God as substance—Mr. Gillespie seeks to prove that the infinite being is intelligent. He says: "Intelligence either began to be, or it never began to be. That it never began to be is evident in this, that if it began to be, it must have had a cause, for whatever begins to be must have a cause. And the cause of intelligence must be of intelligence, for what is not of intelligence cannot make intelligence begin to be. Now, intelligence being before intelligence began to be, is a contradiction. And this absurdity following from the supposition, that intelligence began to be, it is proved that intelligence never began to be—to wit, is of infinity of duration." Mr. Gillespie does not say why "what is not of intelligence cannot make intelligence begin to be;" but it is not unfair to suppose that he means that of things which have nothing in common one cannot be the cause of the other. Let us apply Mr. Gillespie's argument to the material universe, the existence of which is to him so certain that he has treated it as a self-evident proposition.

The material universe—that is, matter—either began to be, or it never began to be. That it never began to be is evident in this, that if it began to be, it must have had a cause, for whatever begins to be must have a cause. And the cause of matter must be of matter, for what is not of matter cannot make matter begin to be. Now, matter being before matter began to be, is a contradiction. And this absurdity following from the supposition that matter—*i.e.*, the material universe—began to be, it is proved that the material universe never began to be—to wit, is of indefinite duration.

This argument as to the eternity of matter is at least as logical as the argument for the eternity of intelligence. Mr. Gillespie might reply, that he affirms the material universe to be finite in duration, and that by the argument for his proposition, Part 2, he proves that the one infinite being (God) is the creator of matter. His words are, "As the material universe is finite in duration or began to be, it



must have had a cause ; for, whatever begins to be must have a cause. And this cause must be [Mr. Gillespie does not explain why], in one respect or other, the simple sole being of infinity of expansion and duration, who is all-knowing [the all-knowing or intelligence rests on the argument which has just been shown to be equally applicable to matter] inasmuch as what being, or cause independent of that being, could there be? And, therefore, that being made matter begin to be." Taking Mr. Gillespie's own argument, that which made matter begin to be, must be of matter, for what is not matter, cannot make matter begin to be ; then Mr. Gillespie's infinite being (God) must be matter. Having as above argued that the being made matter, he proceeds, "and this being shown, it must be granted that the being is, necessarily, all-powerful." Nothing of the kind need be granted. If it were true that it was demonstrated that the infinite being (God) made matter, it would not prove him able to make anything else ; it might show the being cause enough for that effect, but does not demonstrate him cause for all effects. So that if no better argument can be found to prove God all-powerful, his omnipotence remains unproved.

Mr. Gillespie's last proposition is that the being (God) is necessarily completely happy. In dealing with this proposition, Mr. Gillespie talks of unhappiness as existing in various kinds and degrees. But, to adopt his own style of argument, unhappiness either began to be, or it never began to be. That it never began to be is evident in this, that whatever began to be must have had a cause ; for whatever begins to be must have a cause. And the cause of unhappiness must be of unhappiness, for what is not of unhappiness cannot make unhappiness begin to be. But unhappiness being before unhappiness began to be, is a contradiction ; therefore unhappiness is of infinity of duration. But proposition 5, part 2, says there is but one being of infinity of duration. The one being of infinity of duration is therefore necessarily unhappy. Mr. Gillespie's arguments recoil on himself, and are destructive of his own affirmations.

In his argument for the sub-proposition, Mr. Gillespie says that God's motive, or one of his motives, to create, must be believed to have been a desire to make happiness, besides his own consummate happiness, begin to be. That is God, who is consummate happiness everywhere for ever, *desired* something. That is, he wanted more than then existed. This is, his happiness was not complete. That is, Mr.



Gillespie refutes himself. But what did infinite and eternal complete happiness desire? It desired (says Mr. Gillespie) to make more happiness—that is, to make more than an infinity of complete happiness.

The writer in the *British Quarterly Review*, in the article before quoted, says: "The ontological argument has always possessed a singular fascination for the speculative mind. It promises and would accomplish so much, if it were only valid. It would be so powerful, if it were only conclusive. But had demonstration been possible, the Theistic argument, like the proofs of mathematics, would have carried conviction to the majority of thinkers long ago. The historical failure is signal, whether in the form in which it was originally cast by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, or in the more elaborate theory of Descartes, or as presented by the ponderous English mind of Cudworth, Henry More, and Dr. Samuel Clarke, it is altogether a *petitio principii*. Under all its modifications it reasons from the necessary notion of a God to his necessary existence; or from the necessary existence of space and time, which are assumed to be the properties or the attributes of a substance, to the necessary existence of that substance. A purely subjective necessity of the reason is carried from within and held conclusive in the realm of objective reality. But the very essence of the problem is the discovery of a valid pathway, by which to pass from the notions of the intellect to the realities of the universe beyond it; we may not, therefore, summarily identify the two, and at the outset take the existence of one as demonstrative of the other. In the affirmation of real existence, we pass from the notion that has entered the mind (or is innate) to the realm of objective being, which exists independently of us who affirm it; and how to pass warrantably from the ideal world within to the real world without is the very problem to be solved. To be valid at its starting point the ontological argument ought to prove that the notion of God is so fixed in the very root of our intelligent nature, that it cannot be dislodged from the mind; and this some thinkers, such as Clarke, have had the hardihood to affirm. To be valid as it proceeds, it ought to prove that the notion, thus necessary in thought, has a real counterpart in the realm of things, in order to vindicate the step it so quietly takes from the ideal notion to the world of real existence. It passes from thought to things, as it passes from logical premiss to conclusion.

But to be logical it must rest contented with an ideal conclusion deduced from its ideal premiss. And thus, the only valid issue of the ontological argument is a system of absolute idealism, of which the theological corollary is Pantheism. But as this is not the Deity the argument essays to reach, it must be pronounced illogical throughout.

“Thus the ontological argument identifies the logical and the real. But the illicit procedure in which it indulges would be more apparent than it is to *à priori* theorists, if the object they imagine they have reached were visible in nature and apprehensible by the senses. To pass from the ideal to the real sphere by a transcendent act of thought, is seen at once to be unwarrantable in the case of sense-perception. In this case it is the presence of the object that alone warrants the transition, else we should have as much right to believe in the real existence of the hippogriff as in the reality of the horse. But when the object is invisible, and is, at the same time, the supreme being in the universe, the speculative thinker is more easily deceived. We must, therefore, in every instance ask him, where is the bridge from the notion to the reality? What is the plank thrown across the chasm which separates these two regions (to use an old philosophical phrase). ‘by the whole diameter of being?’ We can never, by any vault of logic, pass from the one to the other. We are imprisoned within the region of mere subjectivity in all *à priori* demonstration, and how to escape from it is, as we have said before, the very problem to be solved.”

And he adds afterwards: “Suppose that a supreme existence were demonstrable, that bare entity is not the God of Theism, the infinite intelligence and personality of whose existence the human spirit desires some assurance, if it can be had. And a formal demonstration of a primitive source of existence is of no theological value. It is an absolute zero, inaccessible alike to the reason and to the heart, before which the human spirit freezes.”

Pearson's “Prize Essay on Infidelity,” p. 16, says: “The *à priori* mode of reasoning is the exclusive idol of many of the German logicians.....But in their hands this kind of reasoning has completely failed. It conducts the mind to no firm resting-place; it bewilders instead of elucidating our notions of God, of man, and the universe. It gives us no divine personal existence, and leaves us floating in a



region of mere vague abstractions. Such reasonings are either altogether vain, or are not really what they profess to be. In our country the name of Dr. Clarke is chiefly associated with the *à priori* argument. He, and many others, attached to it an immense importance. But however highly extolled in past times, and worthy to be admired as a specimen of intellect; it is now generally set aside as insufficient of itself to demonstrate the being and the attributes of God. Clarke himself found it necessary to stoop to the argument *à posteriori*, and thereby acknowledged the fallacy of attempting to reason exclusively *à priori*.....The fate of Dr. Clarke's pretended demonstration, and the result, in so far as theology is concerned, of the transcendental reasoning of the continental philosophers, show the futility of attempting to rise up to the height of the great argument of the existence of God by the *à priori* method alone."

We now come to the design argument, popularised by Paley, Lord Brougham, and others (see Discussion between Robert Dale Owen and Origen Bachelier).

"Stated in brief compass," the design argument is as follows: "We see marks of adaptation, of purpose, or of foresight, in the objects which, as we learn from experience, proceed from the contrivance of man. We see [it is alleged] similar marks of design or adaptation in nature. We are, therefore, warranted in inferring a world designer; and from the indefinite number of these an infinite designer, and from their harmony his unity. Or thus, we see [it is alleged] the traces of wise and various purpose everywhere in nature. But nature could not of herself have fortuitously produced this arrangement. It could not have fallen into such harmony by accident. Therefore, the cause of this wise order cannot be a blind, unintelligent principle, but must be a free rational mind."

William Gillespie "Treatise on the Necessary Existence of Deity," writes that the design argument "can never make it appear that infinity belongs in any way to God." It "can only entitle us to infer the existence of a being of finite extension, for, by what rule in philosophy can we deduce from the existence of an object finite in extent (and nothing is plainer than that the marks of design which we can discover must be finite in their extent) the existence of a cause of infinity of extension? What, then, becomes of the omnipresence of the Deity, according to those who are content to rest satisfied from the reasoning of experience?.....It



will be vain to talk of the Deity being present by his energy, although he may not be present by his substance, to the whole universe. For, 'tis natural to ask not so much how it is proved that God is virtually present, though not substantially present, in every part of nature; as what can be meant by being everywhere present by mere energy?" This "reasoning can no more make out that the Deity is omnipresent by his virtue, than that he is omnipresent as to his substance.....And, from the inaptitude of the reasoning under consideration to show that immensity, or omnipresence, belongs to God, it will be found to follow, directly and immediately, that his wisdom and power cannot be shown to be more than finite, and that he can never be proved to be a free agent.....Omnipresence (let it be only by energy) is absolutely necessary in a being of infinity of wisdom. And, therefore, 'the design argument' is unable to evince that the Deity is in possession of this attribute. It likewise plainly follows, from the inaptitude of this argument to show that God is omnipresent, that thereby we cannot prove infinity of power to belong to him. For, if the argument cannot make out that the being it discovers is everywhere present, how can it ever make out that he is everywhere powerful? By careful reflection, too, we may perceive that omnipotence of another kind than power, which can exert itself in all places, requires the existence of immensity." The design argument "can never evince that God is a free agent.....If we cannot prove the immensity or omnipresence of the Deity, we can for that reason never show that he is omniscient, that he is omnipotent, that he is entirely free.....If the Deity cannot be proved to be of infinity in any given respect, it would be nothing less than absurd to suppose that he could be proved to be of infinity in any other respect." It "can do no more than prove that at the commencement of the phenomena which pass under its review, there existed a cause exactly sufficient to make the effects begin to be. That this cause existed from eternity, the reasonings from experience by no means show. Nay, for aught they make known, the designer himself may not have existed long before those marks of design which betoken his workmanship." This reasoning "cannot prove that the God whom it reveals has existed from all eternity; therefore, for anything it intimates, God may at some time cease to be, and the workmanship may have an existence when the workman hath fallen into anni-

hilation.....Such reasonings can never assure us of the unity of the Deity." "Whether there be one God or not, the argument from experience doth by no means make clear. It discovers marks of design in the phenomena of nature, and infers the existence of at least one intelligent substance sufficient to produce them. Further, however, it advances not our knowledge. Whether the cause of the phenomena be one god or many gods, it pretends not to determine past all doubt.....But did this designer create the matter in which the design appeared? Of this the argument cannot convince us, for it does no more than infer a designing cause from certain appearances, in the same way we would infer, from finding some well-contrived machine in a desert, that a human being had left it there.....Now, because this reasoning cannot convince us of such a creation, it cannot convince us there is not a plurality of deities, or of the causes of things.....If we cannot prove the eternity of God, it is not possible we can prove the unity of God. To say that, for anything we know to the contrary, he may have existed from all eternity, being much the same as saying that, for anything we know to the contrary, there may be another god or many gods beside." (Prefatory Introduction.)

In the course of an examination of the hypotheses of Charles Darwin, in the *Fortnightly Review* for 1868, Mr. George Henry Lewes, dealing with the embryonic stages of animal life, and objecting to the hypothesis of a creative plan, asks : "What rational interpretation can be given to the succession of phases each embryo is forced to pass through? None of these phases have any adaptation to the future state of the animal, but are in positive contradiction to it, or are simply purposeless ; many of them have no adaptation, even to its embryonic state. What does the fact imply? There is not a single known organism which is not developed out of simpler forms. Before it can attain the complex structure which distinguishes it, there must be an evolution of forms which distinguish the structures of organisms lower in the series. On the hypothesis of a plan which pre-arranged the organic world, nothing could be more unworthy of a supreme intelligence than this inability to construct an organism at once, without making several tentative efforts, undoing to-day what was so carefully done yesterday, and repeating for centuries the same tentatives and the same corrections in the same succession. Do not let us blink this consideration. There is a traditional

phrase which is in vogue amongst anthropomorphists—a phrase which has become a sort of argument—‘the great architect.’ But if we are to admit the human point of view, a glance at the facts of embryology must produce very uncomfortable reflections. For what shall we say to an architect who was unable—or, being able, was obstinately unwilling—to erect a palace, except by first using his materials in the shape of a hut, then pulling them down and rebuilding them as a cottage, then adding storey to storey, and room to room, not with any reference to the ultimate purposes of a palace, but wholly with reference to the way in which houses were constructed in ancient times? Would there be a chorus of applause from the Institute of Architects, and favourable notices in newspapers of this profound wisdom? Yet this is the sort of succession on which organisms are constructed. The fact has long been familiar; how has it been reconciled with infinite wisdom?” (See *Quarterly Review*, vol. cxxvii., p. 143, where the reader will find a long and special pleading in favour of the design argument.)

Objecting to the validity of the design argument, which he regards as a signal failure, the writer in the *British Quarterly Review* says (July, 1871, p. 47): “1. The effects it examines, and from which it infers a cause, are finite, while the cause it assumes is infinite; but the infinity of the cause can be no valid inference from an indefinite number of finite effects. The indefinite is still the finite; and we can never perform the intellectual feat of educating the infinite from the finite by the multiplication of the latter. It has been said by an acute defender of the teleological argument that the number of designed phenomena (indefinitely vast) with which the universe is filled, is sufficient to suggest the infinity of the designing cause.....The vastest range of design is of no greater validity than one attested instance of it, so far as proof is concerned. It is not accumulation, but relevancy, of data that we need. But (2), at the most, we only reach an artificer or protoplast, not a creator—one who arranged the phenomena of the world, not the originator of its substance—the architect of the cosmos, not the maker of the universe. Traces of mind [if] discoverable amid the phenomena of the world cast no light upon the fact of its creation, or the nature of its source. There is no analogy between a human artificer arranging a finite mechanism and a divine creator originating a world; nor is there a parallel



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